

Unauthorized Radio Operation

FCC Consumer Facts

Background

Section 301 of the Communications Act of 1934 prohibits the “use or operation of any apparatus for the transmission of energy or communications or signals by radio” without a license issued by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Thus, generally, in order to use or operate a radio station, the Communications Act requires that you first obtain a license by the FCC.

However, there are certain limited exceptions. For example, the FCC has provided blanket authorization to operators of **Citizens Band** (CB) radios, **radio control stations**, **domestic ship** and **aircraft radios** and certain other types of devices. This blanket authorization means that operators of these radio facilities are not required to have individual station licenses. Operators are required to operate their stations in a manner consistent with the FCC’s operational and technical rules for those services. Failure to do so could be considered an unauthorized operation.

Sanctions

The FCC takes enforcement of unauthorized radio operations very seriously. Anyone found operating a radio station without an FCC authorization can be subject to a variety of enforcement actions, including seizure of equipment, imposition of monetary forfeitures, and criminal penalties.

To File a Complaint

Written complaints alleging unauthorized radio operation should be sent to:

Federal Communications Commission
Enforcement Bureau
Spectrum Enforcement Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

Complaints should include:

- The name of the operator, if known;
- How the station identifies itself;
- The location of the station;
- The operating frequency;
- The type of station being operated; and
- Whether the station’s operation is causing interference.

To File a Complaint (cont’d.)

You may file electronically using the FCC Form 475 (general complaint form) at www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html. You may also file your complaint in other ways:

E-Mail: fccinfo@fcc.gov.

Mail: Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554.

Phone: Toll Free: 1-888-CALL-FCC
(1-888-225-5322) voice
1-888-TELL-FCC
(1-888-835-5322) TTY.

(More) 



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For this or any other consumer publication in an accessible format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio) please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/>.

This document is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceeding or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

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